

## Relationships Advice sheet: July 2017: Youth Suicide

### Introduction

<https://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/research/online-survey/july-2017-youth-suicide/introduction>

Youth suicide rates in Australia are higher than in many other countries and suicide is the leading cause of death for young people. While the overall suicide rate for young people is lower than for older cohorts, a greater percentage of deaths are attributable to suicide in younger age groups when compared to older age groups. This is due a greater proportion of deaths being attributable to other causes for older people.

While suicide can affect anyone regardless of their personal characteristics and family background, some young people are at greater risk. Death rates from suicide are considerably higher for young men when compared to young women and for young rural men when compared to young men living in cities.

Research also shows that for young people, for every one suicide there are approximately 100 to 200 suicide attempts.

Most suicide is preventable. Suicide prevention starts with recognising the warning signs and taking them seriously, talking to the young person about what's going on, and helping them seek professional support.

Relationships Australia is committed to reducing suicide and works collaboratively with Suicide Prevention Australia and other suicide prevention and mental health service providers to develop a community that knows how to ask for help and how to give help.

The focus of Relationships Australia's July 2017 monthly online survey was to explore community understanding of youth suicide by asking visitors to our website a few questions about their views and knowledge of youth suicide.

### Previous research finds that...

<https://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/research/online-survey/july-2017-youth-suicide/previous-research-finds-that>

- The number of suicide deaths is consistently 3 times higher in males than females.
- The highest age-specific suicide rate for males in 2015 was observed in the 85+ age group, with the next highest age-

specific suicide rate being in the 45-49, 40-44 and 50-54 year age groups.

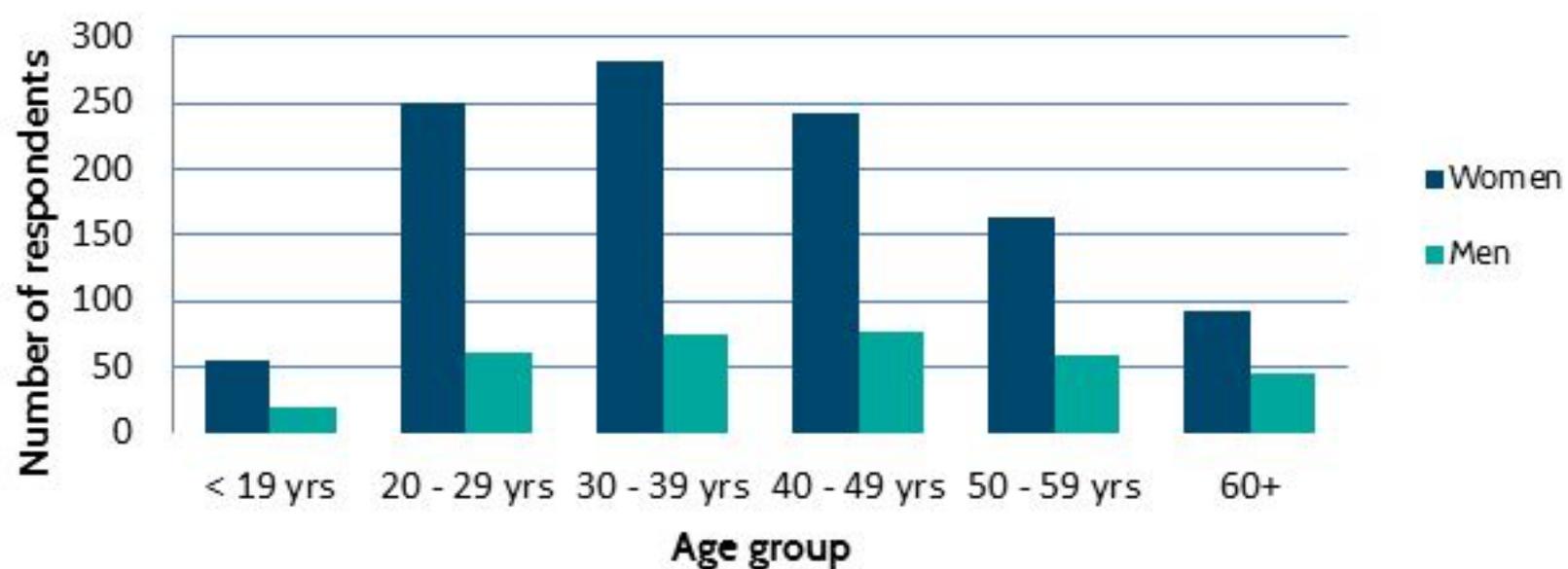
- The highest age-specific suicide rate for females in 2015 was observed in the 45-49 age group, followed by the 50-54, 35-39 and 55-59 age groups.
- The lowest age-specific suicide rate for males was in the 0-14 year age group and the 15-19 year age groups. However, suicide accounted for 28.6% of deaths among 15-19 year old males and 37.9% of deaths among 20-24 year old males in 2015. The corresponding percentages for females in both of these age groups are 33.9% and 31.4% respectively.
- The highest rates of deliberate self-harm occurs for those aged from their teens to middle age.

### **Results <<https://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/research/online-survey/july-2017-youth-suicide/results>>**

More than 1450 people responded to the Relationships Australia online survey in July 2017. Three-quarters of survey respondents (76%) identified as female, with more females than males responding in every age group (see figure 1 below). More than 55 per cent of respondents comprised women aged between 30-49 years (inclusive).

As for previous surveys, the demographic profile of survey respondents remains consistent with our experience of the groups of people that would be accessing the Relationships Australia website.

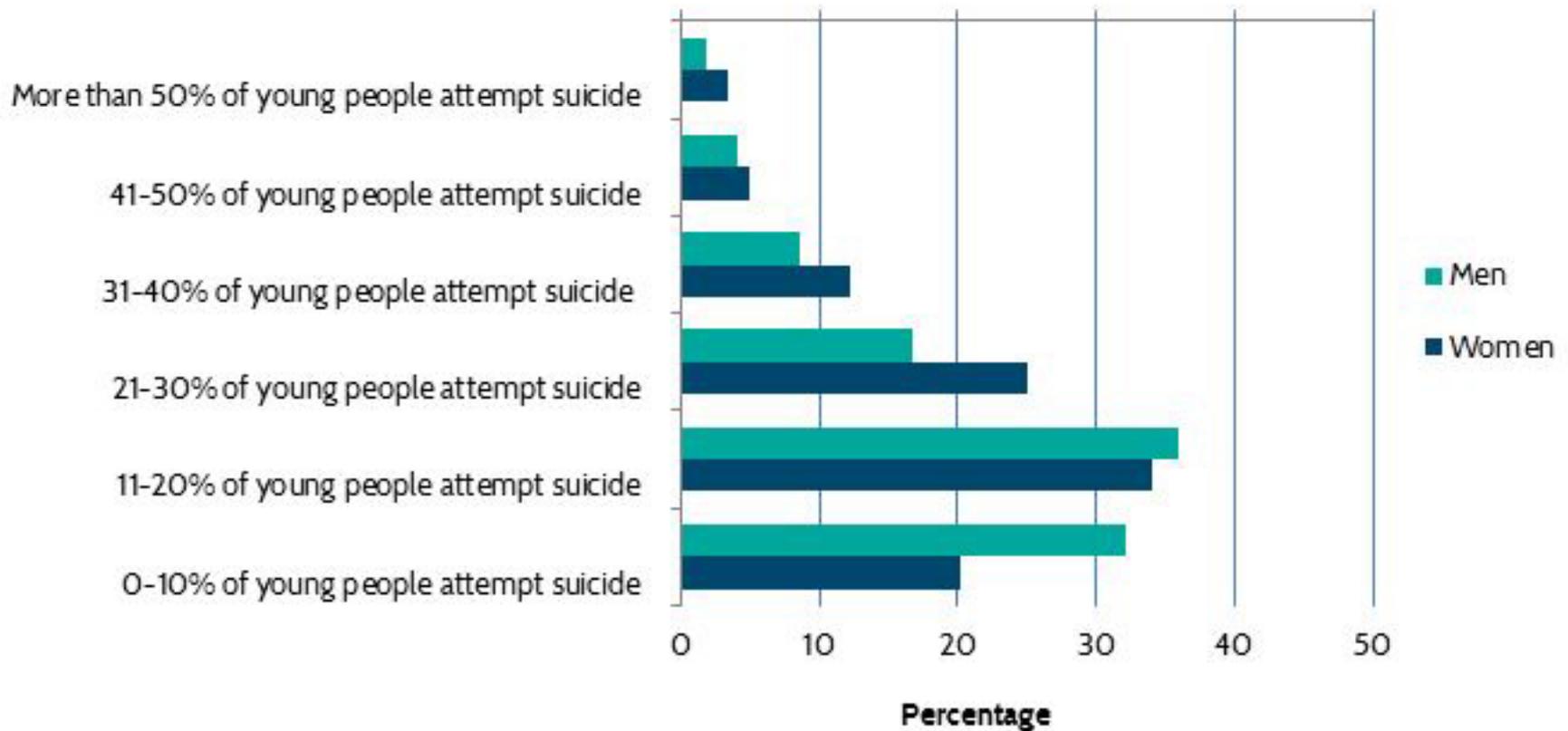
**Figure 1: Respondent demographics**  
Monthly website survey, July 2017, final survey results



More than 90 per cent of female and 85 per cent of male survey respondents thought that suicide was a significant problem in Australia. Estimates of the number of suicide attempts varied between male and female survey respondents, with women were more likely to estimate higher rates of attempted suicide than men (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Subjective estimates of suicide attempts by young people**

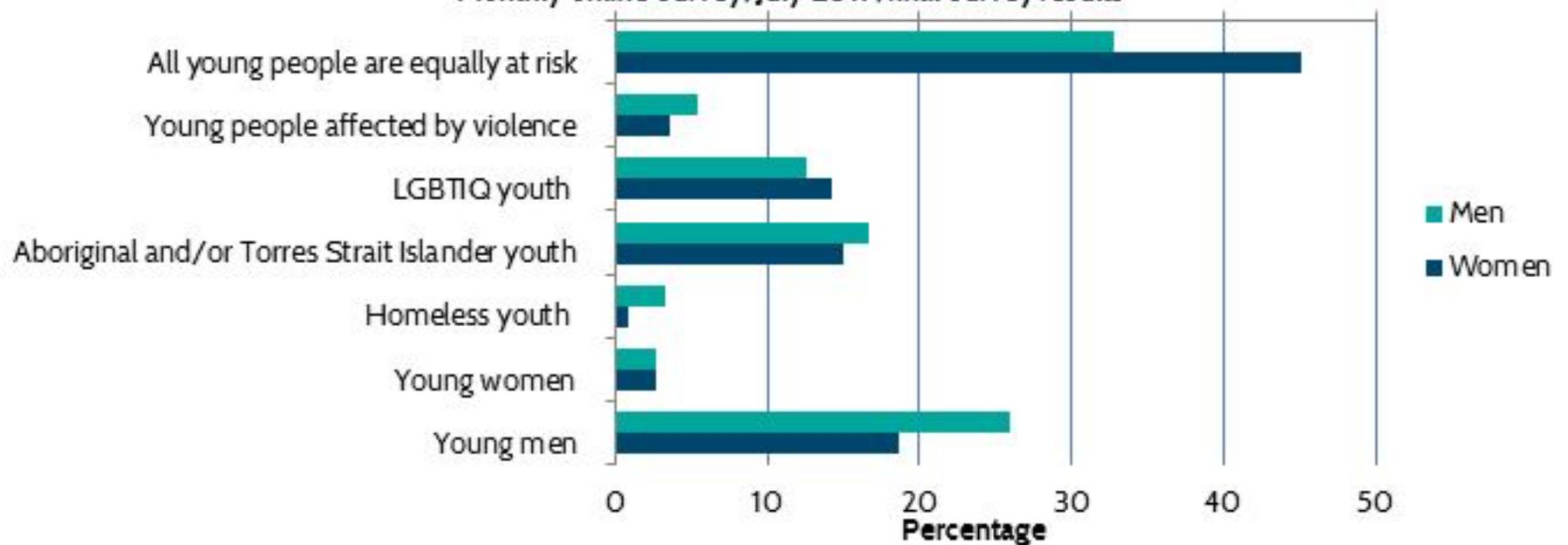
Monthly online survey, July 2017, final survey results



Survey respondents were asked which groups of young people they considered were at highest risk of suicide. More than 45 per cent of women and 33 per cent of men reported that all young people are equally at risk, while one-quarter of men (26%) and one-fifth (19%) of women reported that young men were most at risk of suicide (figure 3).

**Figure 3. Suicide risk factors, subjective reports**

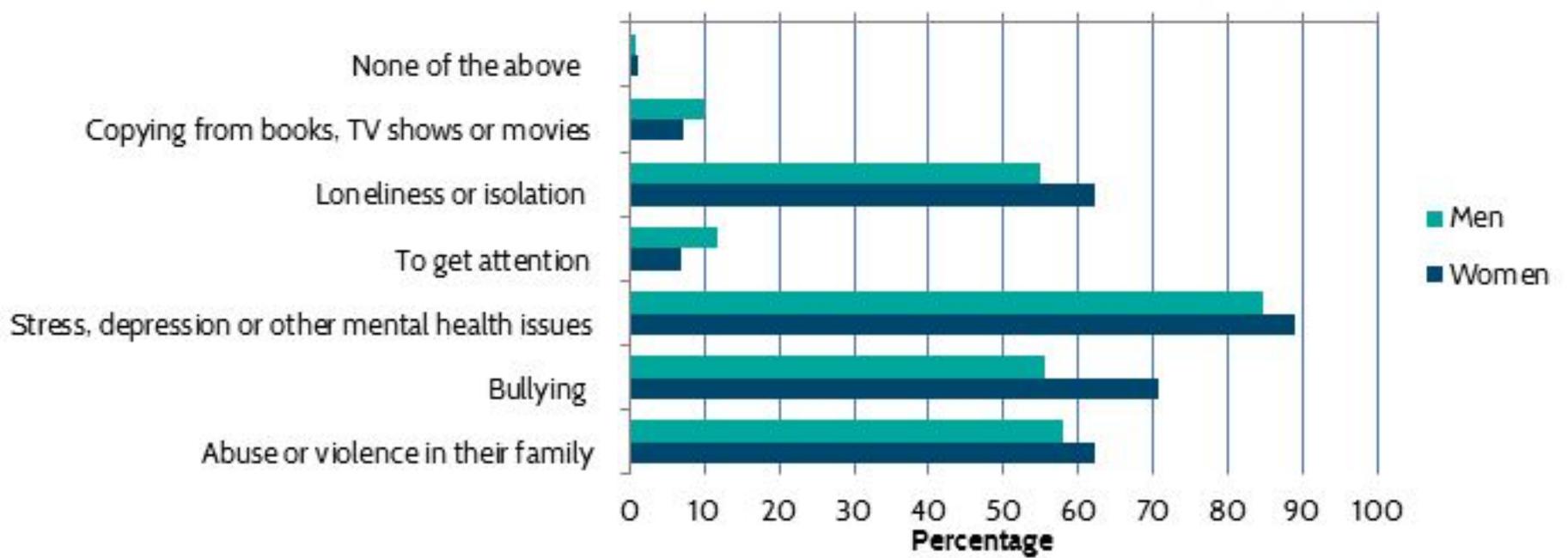
Monthly online survey, July 2017, final survey results



Both male and female survey respondents were most likely to report that they thought stress, depression or other mental health issues (88%) as the greatest reason for suicide risk. A large proportion of survey respondents also reported bullying (67%), loneliness or isolation (61%) and abuse or violence in their family (61%) as reasons for suicide risk for young people (figure 4).

**Figure 4. Reasons for suicide risk, subjective reports**

Monthly online survey, July 2017, final survey results

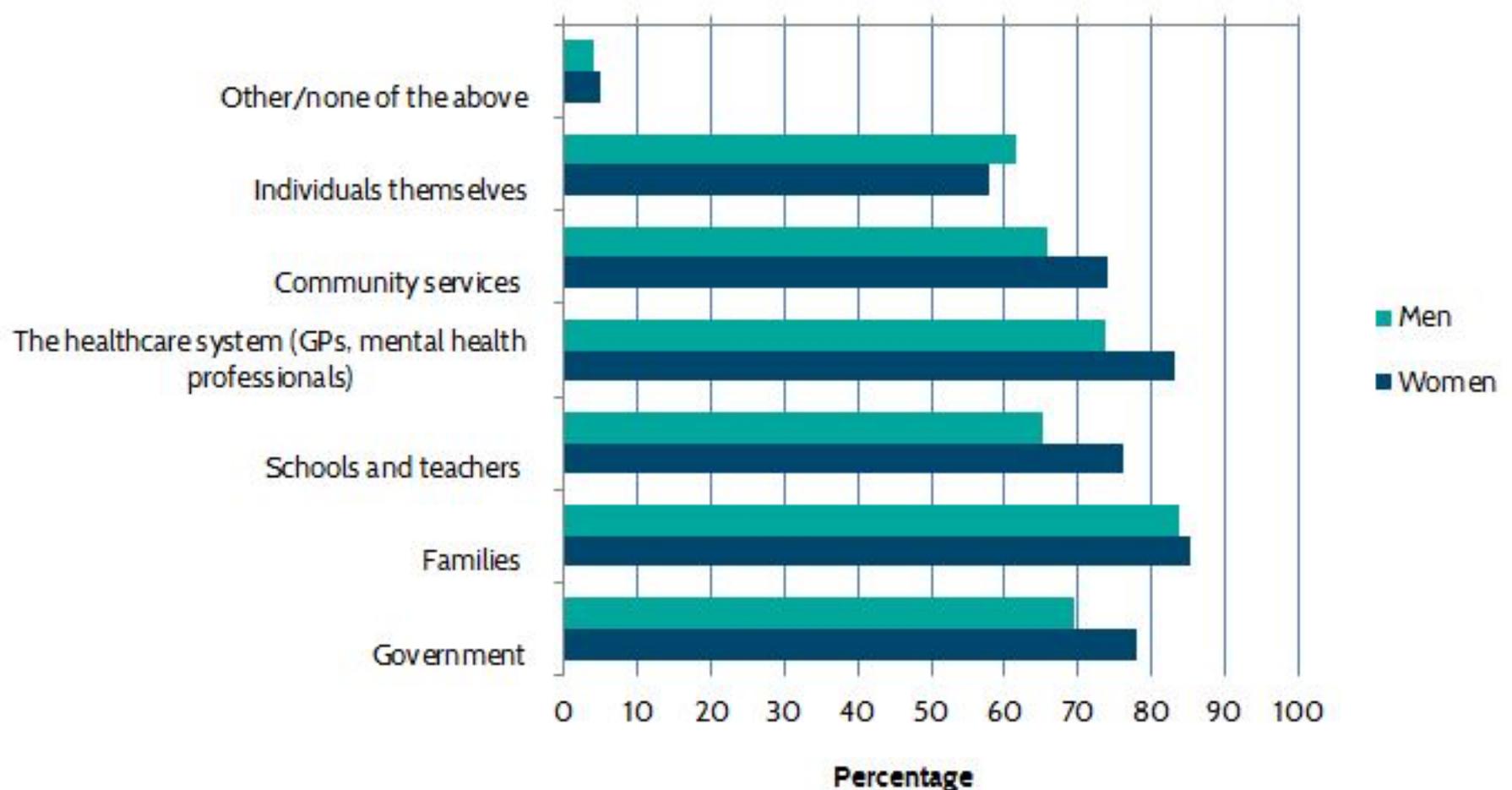


A substantial majority of men (55%) and women (63%) thought that young people used drugs and/or alcohol to cope with suicidal thoughts, followed by using digital media or technology such as apps (10%) and speaking with friends and family (women – 7%, men - 10%).

Figure 5 shows that survey respondents considered that responsibility for reducing suicide lay with many people and organisations. Men were more likely to report that responsibility for reducing youth suicide rested with families (84%) and the healthcare system (74%), while women were more likely to report that it rested with families (85%), the government (78%) and the healthcare system (83%).

**Figure 5. Responsibility for reducing youth suicide, subjective reports**

Monthly online survey, July 2017, final survey results



**References <<https://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/research/online-survey/july-2017-youth-suicide/references>>**

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Causes of Death, Australia, 2015. Catalogue No. 3303.0. ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Goldsmith SK, Pellmar TC, Kleinman AM, Bunney WE, editors. (2002). Reducing suicide: a national imperative. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

## **Resources <<https://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/research/online-survey/july-2017-youth-suicide/resources>>**

### **Where to get help**

Despite increased awareness of mental health issues in the community, suicide is the leading cause of death for young people aged 15-24 years in Australia.

According to Suicide Prevention Australia, suicidal thoughts and behaviour are connected to a range of social, personal and contextual risk factors, such as socio-economic disadvantage, bullying and social exclusion, sexual identity and childhood adversity. Young people may think about suicide because of difficult things that may have happened in their past, things currently going on in their lives that they may be having trouble coping with, how connected and supported they feel, and how they feel in terms of their self-worth and life outlook. Mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety and stressful life events like exams or going through a relationship breakup can also contribute to suicidal thoughts in young people.

Below are some ideas and contact details for services that may help you if you, or someone you know, are thinking about or has attempted suicide.

If you are feeling unsafe right NOW, call the Police on 000.

If you would like to talk to someone you can contact one or more of the services below. You don't have to provide your name or personal details:

- Kid's Helpline: information is available at [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) <<http://www.kidshelpline.com.au>> or by calling 1800 55 1800.
- Lifeline: information is available at [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) <<http://www.lifeline.org.au>> or by calling 13 11 14.
- SANE Australia: information is available at [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org) <<http://www.sane.org>> or by calling 1800 18 7263.
- Suicide Call Back Service: information is available at [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au) <<http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au>> or by calling 1300 659 467.
- Youth Beyond Blue: information is available at [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com) <<http://www.youthbeyondblue.com>> or by calling 1300 22 4636.
- Black Dog Institute: information is available at [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au) <<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au>> or by calling 02 9382 4530.
- Mensline Australia: information is available at [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au) <<http://www.mensline.org.au>> or by calling 1300 78 99 78.
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service: information is available at [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au) <<http://www.1800respect.org.au>> or by calling 1800 737 732, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.
  - Translating and Interpreting Service: 13 14 50.
  - National Relay Service: 133 677.